



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE RELATIONS BETWEEN COLLEGES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS: TENDENCIES AND POSSIBILITIES<sup>1</sup>

---

CARLETON L. BROWNSON

Dean of the College of the City of New York

---

President Wilson has said that "one of the greatest interests that attaches to our generation is, that almost everything regarding education has to be said over again." I like to quote this saying at the outset, as a defense before the event against the charge you may presently bring against me, that I have merely said various things over again. But, in fact, the whole educational field has been so plowed over and harrowed over in recent years, that it has become as difficult to find an untouched corner or to start a new furrow, as it is for graduate students to find subjects for their theses. Where so many individuals and associations and conferences and boards are talking, it is impossible that they should all say different things; not only impossible, but undesirable. We cannot afford to follow the lead of the would-be Doctors of Philosophy in trying to explore and map some region beyond the present frontier, while the heart of the country remains unsubdued; we should not give too much of our time and strength to matters of detail while the fundamental problems remain unsolved.

I do not mean to imply that our present educational condition, marked as it is by so much discussion, disagreement, uncertainty, possibly confusion, is a cause for discouragement. On the contrary, I believe that the very opposite is the case; that he who surveys with care and with impartial judgment the events of recent decades in the world of education will observe sure signs of progress. And the first to which I would direct your attention is the growing spirit of friendliness and co-opera-

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered before the Hudson River Schoolmasters' Club, April 16, 1910.

tion between the secondary schools and the colleges. Time was, and not so very long ago, when the college was, in its own estimation, a kind of Olympus, as compared with the lower earth of the secondary school; when in his own eyes the college professor, or even the college instructor, was to the schoolmaster as Hyperion to a satyr. In other days there was doubtless some reason for this feeling; but, as in all things human, the feeling tended to persist long after the reason had ceased to be. Half a century, or even a quarter of a century, ago, the colleges of New England and the Middle States were practically the only institutions with established traditions, high and fixed standards, and scholarly faculties. With the exception of certain old endowed preparatory schools, whose modest function was to serve the whims of the colleges, the secondary school had not found itself or its mission. Each college went on its own serene way, modified or increased its requirements without consultation either with other colleges or with the preparatory schools, and expected the latter to adapt themselves humbly to the changed conditions.

Then came the period of the establishment of public secondary schools, in ever-increasing numbers, all over the country. Their very number won for them a certain consideration at the hands of the colleges. Furthermore, it soon became evident that they could be extremely useful to the college which was readiest to meet them halfway, in fact that the college was dependent upon them, that it must foster their growth if it would advance its own, and help to make their work efficient if it would improve the quality of its own students. It seems absurd to suggest that such self-evident facts as these were discovered but slowly by the colleges; yet unfortunately we all know a few colleges and many college professors who have hardly discovered them yet, at least if one may judge from appearances.

Another cause which has operated to open the eyes of the college to the claims of the secondary school and so to bring the two institutions nearer together is of vastly greater importance than the one just mentioned, and still has not received, I think, adequate consideration; I refer to the continual advance in

scholarship standards among secondary-school teachers. The secondary schools have always had competent and able *teachers* (all of us, I suppose, have felt the surprise and disappointment of finding less efficient teachers among our college instructors than we had known in the preparatory school). Now-a-days, however, very many of the teachers in our secondary schools are scholars as well, in attainment and in reputation. More and more of them are men who have obtained the doctorate, or at least have done a considerable amount of graduate work. If President Harper's prediction that the degree of Doctor of Philosophy would ultimately become an essential for the high-school teacher has not yet been entirely fulfilled, we are certainly able to note continuous progress in that direction. Hence there is no longer a great gulf fixed between the college and the secondary-school teacher in respect to scholarship, for, one may observe in passing, the doctorate is not yet universally regarded as a *sine qua non* for the college instructor. We might have learned long ago from the Germans that there is no necessary or natural distinction in scholarly attainments between men engaged in secondary teaching and those engaged in college, or even university, work. All of us know, and have known ever since we began our graduate studies, how considerable a portion of the best scientific work in Germany is done by teachers in the *Gymnasias* and the *Realschulen*. But we are slow to get rid of our preconceived notions. I recall two incidents of the early nineties at Yale which almost all of us counted nothing less than astonishing: first, a man who had taught in secondary schools only was called to an assistant professorship in the college; and further, another young man who had made a conspicuously fine record as an instructor in the college, who seemed well on the way to a professorship, resigned his position and undertook the establishment of a preparatory school, saying merely that he felt he could derive more pleasure and accomplish more important service in secondary teaching. Not only that, but he took with him to his new field no less than three more of our instructors. And we queried whether Yale was degenerating, in that it must go to a high school to find a professor, while

at the same time it could not hold its own instructors against the attraction of what seemed to us very lowly positions. Of course, I should complete the story by saying that the new professor has since gained an international reputation as a scholar, and that the schoolmaster has achieved a complete success in his new work; and so, as it chances, I can say with truth. More important, however, from our present point of view, is the fact that we ultimately came to see these incidents in their true light, as not merely strange, but significant, as marking the beginning of a new order of things. We were disabused of our unreasonable and unreasoning prejudice; we came to comprehend faintly that we were all, in school and college alike, engaged in the same great task, and that we were all the same manner of men. Such, I am sure, has been the experience of other colleges and other college teachers. The most conservative of professors, when he sees some of his newly made Doctors of Philosophy called to college positions and others, equally able, called to secondary schools, must gradually conceive a new idea of the dignity of secondary-school teaching and the scholarly rank of secondary-school teachers. He can meet these former pupils of his own on a footing of approximate equality; through them he is brought into closer touch with the schools, he comes to appreciate their problems and is ready to take counsel with them on matters of common interest, and, broadly, his attitude toward the schools becomes one of confidence rather than suspicion. This tendency has gone very far in our own day; not far enough, I am convinced, yet still very far. The school men have deserved, and have therefore won, in ever-increasing measure the respect and consideration of the college faculties. So, at the present time, our so-called learned societies, once composed of college men alone, include in their membership a considerable proportion of secondary teachers; very many of the textbooks you are using are the joint work of college and school men; and we have, in New England, in the Middle States, in the South, and in the West, associations of colleges and preparatory schools, whose members, or, possibly I should say, whose more enlightened members, meet as peers.

I need not remind you that one of the unwritten laws of our own association provides for the alternation in the presidency between college and secondary-school men, and further, that in the discussions of the association the school teachers may criticize the colleges sharply and not be held guilty of *Majestäts-beleidigung*.

This growth of a closer, more cordial relation, a relation based upon mutual dependence and mutual esteem, between the schools and the colleges, is so intimately connected with a second tendency that it is difficult or impossible to say how far each is the cause, or how far each is the effect, of the other. I mean, our increasing realization of this fundamental fact, to quote the words of a college president, "that the school and the college are doing the same thing exactly," that we must "make the boy feel that [in passing from the school to the college] he is not going from one thing to another, but that he is simply going on to prosecute a little further the fair journey upon which he has set out." It seems strange enough now that one should not have realized this long ago. It was so manifest that the line between school and college was purely arbitrary, a historical accident. Why, in all reason, a foreordained and inviolable line between Vergil on the one hand and Horace and Livy on the other, why geometry in the school and trigonometry in the college, why just three years of Greek for admission and not two or four? Perhaps no one of you was ever in bondage to these prescriptions; I am sure that I was, however, and that my companions in bondage were many. My recollection does not reach back very far, yet I can remember when one of our Latin professors hesitated to offer a college course, or perhaps it was a graduate course, in Caesar, lest he should be laughed at by his colleagues and the students alike. Caesar was for school boys alone; who could imagine otherwise? I fancy myself that he had more cause to fear his colleagues than the students; for our boys found out before we did that there was nothing fundamental about the change from school to college; witness the complaints we hear from Freshmen who are dis-

appointed at finding themselves merely going on with the same old grind.

But if the entire educational course should be, and is, a continuous one, why so much trouble at the point of passing from school to college? Here of course one approaches a burning question, which I have neither the ability nor the inclination to consider in detail. Let me say, then, at once that I believe the development of a more cordial, considerate, mutually trustful relation between secondary schools and colleges gives promise of a time when our boys will pass from the one to the other with just as little trouble and circumstance as now attend their passage from one class to another, in either school or college. More concretely, I mean the universal adoption of the so-called certificate system of admission to college. Here we are manifestly in the doubtful territory, at once the realm of tendency and of possibility. The universities and colleges of the Middle West, through the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, are frankly and entirely committed to the certificate system. The New England College Entrance Certificate Board, by eliminating in great measure the abuses incident to the system, has given it a standing in this part of the country which it did not have in other days. And now the Association of the Middle States and Maryland has recently established a similar board, to work along about the same lines as the New England board. On the other hand, such prominent institutions as Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale admit by examination only and not by certificate. With them such a policy is not only traditional, but manifestly a matter of real conviction. And the influence which they exert is very great. Furthermore, the friends of these colleges are prone to think that here is a method of dividing the sheep from the goats, that admission by certificate marks the weak college, whereas the strong college insists always upon an entrance examination.

But we are presumably reasonable creatures, and therefore not inclined to accept such a complacent theory as this without proof. Let us pause to consider some of the arguments which have been urged in favor of the certificate system, notably by

President Rhees of the University of Rochester.<sup>2</sup> And first, the principal's certificate gives the college the benefit of the judgment of a man who is personally acquainted with the candidate, who knows his individual traits and capacities, and who further knows the record he has made through a considerable period in work of the same sort as that which he will do in college—of the same sort in that it calls for the same qualities of mind and character. Here is a very great advantage. For let us get to the bottom of the matter if we can. Suppose any one of us wanted to find out, for purposes of his own, the ability and attainments of a given boy in Latin or mathematics: would he prefer to give the boy some examination papers to pass, or to consult a colleague who had taught him Latin or mathematics for one or two or three years? I cannot believe that there is one of us who would not choose the second method. To be sure human judgment is fallible; but the question is not as between human judgment and a mechanical contrivance which cannot err, but between two forms, so to speak, of human judgment: the judgment of the man who is in a position to know in the individual case, and the judgment of the men who make examination papers for the mass and the men who read them by the mass. The certificate of his teacher will do justice instead of injustice to the boy who is likely to be rattled, as we say, by an examination, especially an examination which to him is supremely important and which he undergoes at the hands of strangers; it will do justice instead of injustice to the boy who occasionally has an "off" day; or, a more important matter, it will do justice instead of injustice to the able boy who has not completed thoroughly all the prescribed items of the preparatory course. For, in all reason, what the college wants to know, and the only thing it can care to know, is whether the boy is fitted and competent to do the work that it gives its students to do. After long subservience to detailed statements of entrance requirements we are coming to see this fundamental fact. I cannot do better than to quote here from the last report

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland* (1907), 28-39.



of President Pritchett of the Carnegie Foundation. He states that the colleges are now tending toward a "policy marked by these two important features: (1) freedom for the secondary school in choice of studies and in methods of teaching, so that it may make its work inspiring and fruitful to those who resort to it, the majority of whom will not enter college; (2) insistence by the college merely upon the attainment by the student in the secondary school of an adequate intellectual training within large limits, irrespective of the details through which it may have been procured." These, I believe, are words of truth. The adequate intellectual training is the one thing needful. And I think we can best learn whether the boy has this one thing needful from the principal who knows him.

To turn to a second, a negative, argument: it is becoming more and more clear that entrance examinations are but a poor test of a boy's fitness to enter college. Any one of us can recall instances in his own experience where friends perhaps, or perhaps pupils, have been admitted by examination when they should not have been admitted, or debarred when they should not have been debarred. There are too many accidents, as I have suggested above, which may affect the trustworthiness of the results. But further, we now have before us for the first time, in President Pritchett's recent report, statistics of the actual practice of those colleges which admit by examination only. These statistics are sufficiently startling. They show, for example, that of the whole number of candidates admitted last fall to the undergraduate departments of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia, no less than 55 per cent were admitted with conditions, or, in other words, did not pass the entrance examinations. And this percentage of conditioned students is slightly better, i.e., lower, than that recorded for the same institutions in the fall of 1908. That is, these colleges admit by their practice that their examination test is inadequate and inconclusive. No doubt it is proper that they should make exceptions; none of us but would be willing to give the slightly conditioned candidate a chance; but when the exceptions become the rule, it seems clear that there is something amiss. I doubt,

therefore, whether President Pritchett's conclusion can be challenged; he says: "If so considerable a body of students classed as deficient by the examinations deserve admission, it is clear that some other means of regulating admission ought to be devised . . . ; and if they do not deserve admission, then the present policy is a blow at the efficiency of the good secondary schools"—in which case, I may add, the examination system proves itself injurious, not merely to an individual or a particular institution, but to the general cause of education.

Again, consider this immense advantage of the certificate system, that it "leaves the secondary school free to devote itself to education rather than to cramming for examination," studying over old examination papers of the various colleges, and reviewing again and again the things which they touch upon most often. A prominent high-school principal in New York City was saying to me only two weeks ago: "It seems to me sometimes that we don't do much teaching now-a-days." And then he listed for me the examinations which his students are called upon to take: the state examinations, the training-school examinations, the examinations of the College Entrance Board, and so on. Such a condition of things is nothing short of lamentable; for the secondary school should be teaching first, last, and all the time; and furthermore—a point in passing which is by no means unimportant—it should not be hampered in its work by having to employ different methods, perhaps form different recitation groups, for those students who do intend to enter college and those who do not.

Lastly, let me recall what I was saying a little while ago, that we are all, in school and college, engaged in the same task; that a boy's educational course is one course, and not two courses; and if there is anything which will ease the transition from school to college, which will make the boy feel that he has not come to a sharp turn, but only to a point where the road widens a little, it is worth adopting. I believe that the certificate system of admission can help to perform for us this great service.

I have not mentioned the disadvantages of such a system or

the abuses to which it is liable, but I have no doubt that you have been recalling them to yourselves. They are certainly obvious and serious enough. The certificate privilege is a dangerous thing in the hands of a principal who may yield to outside pressure, or to the desire to be known as sending large numbers of his students to college, and therefore give a certificate to a boy who is unfit. It is this above all which has brought the certificate system into deserved disrepute in many quarters. I believe, however, that if the possibility of such abuses can be eliminated, this system is far better in almost every way than the plan of admission by examination; and secondly, that abuses can in fact be eliminated—still more, that they have been eliminated in our own day. I refer particularly to the policy adopted in the Middle West, which may be briefly described as an examination of the schools rather than of individual students. The North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools has prepared a list of accredited schools, imposing certain specific tests with regard to equipment, number and quality of teachers, etc., and then, the list once prepared, subjects these schools and others which may desire to be accredited to “rigid, thoroughgoing, sympathetic inspection” through officers appointed for that purpose. The schools, one may say, are conditioned before the event and not their students after the event. It is substituting a wholesome for an unwholesome condition, using the word, if you please, in both senses. The inspector can, and does, say to the school principal, “You must improve your instruction or your instructors in this or that department or you cannot remain on the accredited list;” or “you must reduce the amount of work exacted from this or that instructor;” or “you must improve your library facilities.” It is easy to understand the beneficial effects of such a policy upon the secondary schools and so upon the whole educational system. The tonic, stimulating influence upon the school of examinations conducted by some external authority—an influence which we all appreciate and for the sake of which many of us may have wished to hold to the system of entrance examinations, despite its defects—this influence, I say,

is not lost, but intensified. The college authority uses the ounce of prevention, instead of using, or rather not using, the pound of cure. It sees to it that its candidates shall be well prepared, instead of rejecting them, or accepting them, when they are ill prepared. One other happy result is that the secondary school may not only, as I have said, "devote itself to education," but may, within limits, plan its work as it will and allow some freedom to individual teachers. A teacher of Greek, for example, may venture to read the sixth book of the *Iliad*, perhaps, instead of the third, and thus get away from the everlasting repetition, to the great good of himself and his class.

To the colleges the results of the system are eminently satisfactory. Their students are in fact well prepared. None come to them by certificate except from accredited schools, and the principals of accredited schools do not give certificates to unfit candidates.

Here, I believe, is the very nearest approach that has yet been found to the successful solution of a troublesome problem. Is it possible here in the East? The New England College Entrance Certificate Board and the Middle States Association have not adopted the western plan; not, however, because they did not count it the best plan, but because the expense incident to an adequate system of inspection seemed to them prohibitive. I am one of many who hope that a way will soon be found of overcoming this obstacle. And may I venture to express the further hope that the State Education Department of New York, which has done so much for the common cause both in this state and in others, may lead the way in this matter, and so strengthen the hearts and unlock the treasuries of the eastern colleges? We need a leader who will command respect and who is not bound by such financial limitations as hamper the impecunious colleges; and the State Education Department, I am sure in the one case and I hope in the other, possesses these qualifications. If a rigid examination by the department of the secondary schools of New York rather than their scholars should accomplish the results we have reason to expect, the example would speedily be followed by our colleges; and then

“relations between colleges and secondary schools” would cease to be a subject for discussion.

Finally, permit me to dwell for a moment upon one further possibility. I am optimist enough to look forward to the day when the secondary school shall have gained such efficiency and strength, mainly through loyal service and effort from within, partly through the sympathetic, helpful counsel and inspection of its college friends, that it shall stand alone, shall rule in its own domain independent, because no longer needing either supervision or examination. It will swim without the cork of college inspection, and college faculties will accept its verdict precisely as they accept that of their own instructors. Why should it not be so? Recall for a moment a noteworthy feature in the policy of those institutions which, we say, admit by examination only. Harvard, for example, examines all candidates for admission to undergraduate courses; but it admits to its medical school anyone who holds a college diploma. Columbia examines all candidates for admission to undergraduate courses; but it admits to the College of Physicians and Surgeons anyone who has completed two years of college study. In other words, these institutions accept the certificate of a college but not that of a secondary school. Such discrimination against the secondary school may be reasonable at the present time; but can anyone who realizes what the secondary school has achieved, against manifold obstacles, during the past generation, doubt that such discrimination will some day be a thing of the past? I await, therefore, although I may not live to see it, the establishment of an honor system between the schools and the colleges. It should not be harder for us to rise to such a system in our relations with one another than for our students to attain it in their relations with us.